

Yes, there is too much violence on television. In general, there is too much trash on TV--too many programs designed to titillate and evoke response and viewership by provoking our more basic, ingrained responses.

Does violence on TV harm our children? Hard to say. The true responsibility for raising children lies with the parents and nowhere else. The best thing we can do to bring up our children as responsible, humane, and capable human beings is to make sure we teach them well, instill in them the values we want to see in our society, teach them to learn and grow and perform to the best of their abilities--help them be even better than ourselves.

Does violence on TV hinder this? I suspect it could give children, just like anyone else, ideas--but all media can do that. What really matters is how parents and guardians respond to, coach, and prepare their kids for dealing with the things they encounter in the world--including on TV.

I think the most harmful aspects of television are the unchecked bombardment with commercial messages ("Consume! Consume! Buy more! Covet!") and the generally unengaging nature of TV programming. Brain activity of a person watching TV is actually significantly less than brain activity of the same person while sleeping. TV, at least as we experience it today, does not stimulate our minds or give us anything challenging to do. And yet it is too easy for viewers to become engrossed in televised inanity and spend hours watching nothing. This is far more damaging than excessive violence in TV programming--violence is merely indicative of much larger quality problems.

So what to do about it? Well, I hesitate to advocate censorship of any form--it is not the fact of violence or nudity or profanity that does damage so much as what the viewer does with the information such "adult" content presents. Ideally, we'd be able to establish guidelines for content that do not limit creativity or subject matter, but help us construct more scintillating entertainment--and our TV industry would follow them. However, I know that many companies and many people will not follow mere guidelines if they do not want to or feel like they have to. So regulations may be necessary. I don't know what to suggest just yet, however.